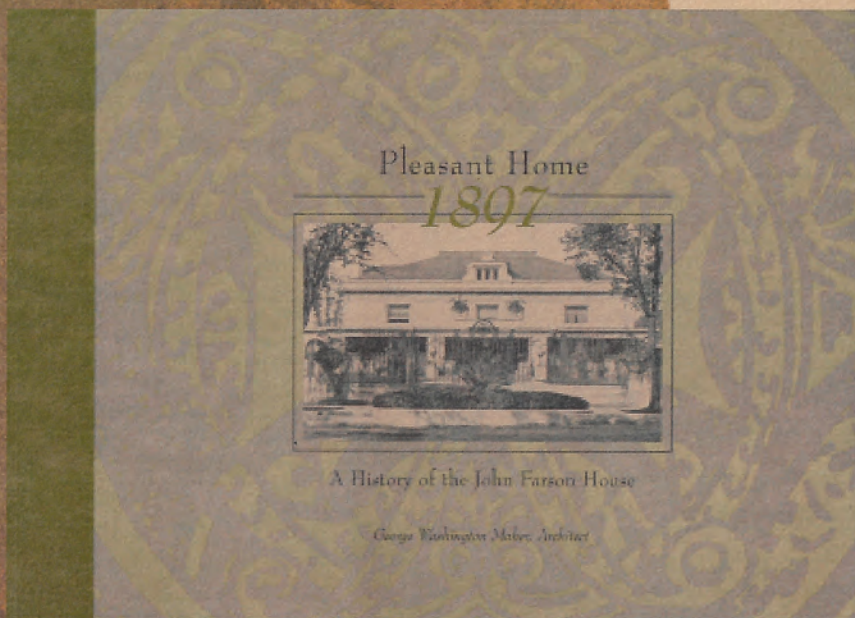


PRAIRIE

Popular and Progressive American and World Architecture, 1880-1930

Incorporating Geo. W. Maher Quarterly



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Volume 1, Issue 2 • January-March into Spring 2003



New Mexico adobe

Unidentified place in winter and summer, photographed by D.B. Friedrichs, published by Sunshine Distributing, El Prado, New Mexico.

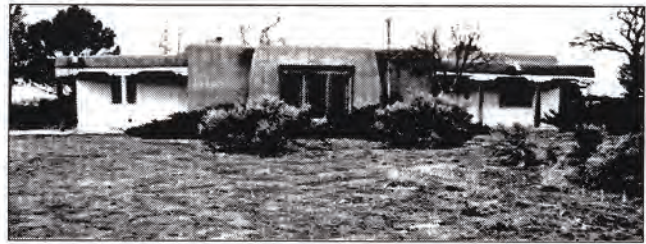
Cover. Kathleen Cummings' new book about "Pleasant Home," against a wallpaper fragment from George W. Maher's Hager House in Waukon, Iowa.

Next page, lower left. Above, organic back of San Francisco de Asis church (c. mid-1700s to 1818), Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico. Below, adobe farmhouse remnants on way to Angel Fire, New Mexico.

Indigenous in the Southwest

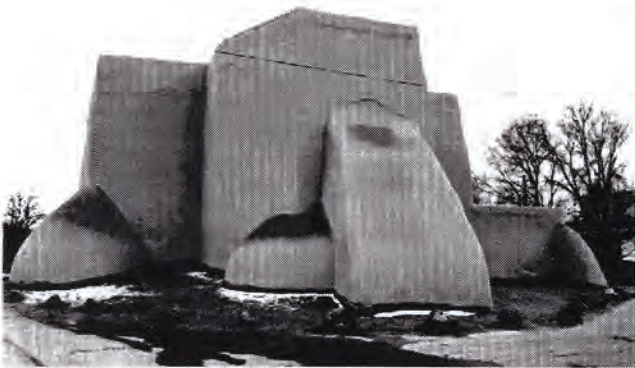
Fifteen days' auto-touring took us places we'd been before, some new and most wondrous, once off the Interstates and numerous though sometimes likable billboards. We went from prairies to plains to deserts and searched for what seemed to belong: a bit of the South Platte River near I-76 on the way to Denver; tumbleweeds, "a whole herd of them," (said my driver), rushing across 76; a Bruce Goff portfolio at an antique shop in Taos owned by a man who studied with Goff at the University of Kansas; Alfred Stieglitz saying "art happens where thinking ends," quoted at an exhibition at the Georgia O'Keeffe museum in Santa Fe.

About the Southwest Native Americans, from Marsden Hartley, "The Red Man," 1921. Americans of this time and of time to come shall know little or nothing of their spacious land until they have sought some degree of intimacy with our first artistic relative. The redman is the one truly indigenous religionist and esthete of America.



Frieda Lawrence estate for sale

A 13-acre house (above, c. 1890s) and guest house (right) near Taos was being offered for \$749,500. One owner was Frieda Lawrence, the wife of D.H. Lawrence. She lived there with her second husband Angellino Ravagli. The summer kitchen has 20-inch-thick adobe walls. Info Evan Blish, 505-776-8106 or 751-6118.



Look
left
for

Maher-like in New Mexico

At 117 High Street in a neighborhood near downtown Albuquerque, we found the house shown right above. Though cruciform rather than rectangular, the little house is much like one of the worker houses (right below) designed by George Maher for Kincaid, Illinois, in 1913 and after. The houses share a wide arch.



This Prairie

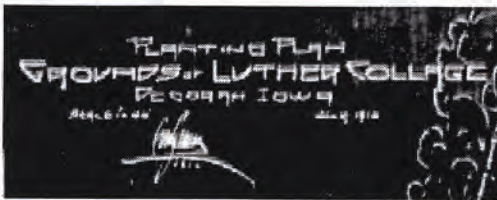
Robert Spencer dominates with more of his farm-houses. He once planned to write a book about farms but didn't. Also: a Spencer house in Iowa, Buck's Moeng House gone, Maher updates.

Prairie as landscape architecture

Jensen's prairie for Lutherans in Iowa

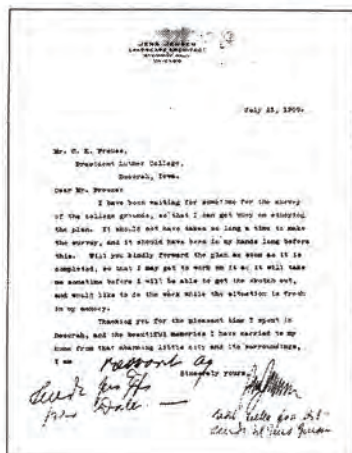
Fine architecture is not part of the heritage of the Lutheran colleges of the Upper Midwest. St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, is all imitation Gothic. An out-the-car-window glance suggested that Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, is pseudo-Georgian. Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, is a hodgepodge, with even one postmodern piece, except for its central

College graduates in Chicago, and in 1909 the Luther College Club there recommended engaging Jensen for a grounds plan. Jensen saw what there was soon after



Jensen signature on Luther planting plan. At right, the plan with Main Building circled for orientation.. Below, a 1909 Jensen letter to Luther President C.K. Preuss, thanking, in part, for his recent and first visit to Luther, and the plan realized, Main Building circled.. Courtesy, Luther College Archives.

lawn, and considering its condition and encroachments even that's not right. The landscape, the "grounds," was designed by Chicago landscape architect Jens Jensen (1860-1951). Opened in 1861 in Halfway Creek, Wisconsin, northeast of La Crosse, Luther College was moved to Decorah in 1862. Originally from Denmark, Jensen knew Luther



Jensen in Decorah, Iowa

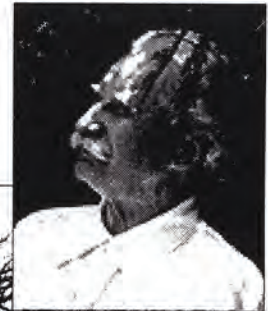
on a visit to Decorah, during which he took pictures and made notes about native plants. On July 23, 1909, Jensen wrote Luther President C.K. Preuss, "Thanking you for the pleasant time I spent in Decorah, and the beautiful memories I have carried to my home from that charming little city and its surroundings..." Jensen's plan followed, with three clearings called "The Campus," "Tennis Clearing" and "The Athletic Field," which were separated by hard maples and old and new oaks. He placed a trail on the west side of the campus leading to one of his signature council rings. He rerouted roads. He removed a European-influenced avenue of elms (c. 1874) leading to the Main Building (1865, 1874, burned).

Jensen's Luther planting list included: *Berberis thunbergii*, birch, black locust, blackberries, crabapple, Douglas spruce, elm, false indigo, hard maple, hawthorne, high bush cranberry, honeysuckle, Indian current, juniper, linden, native ash, nine bark, oak, Persian lilac, *Philadelphus*, red maple, redbud, roses, sheep berry, snow berry, spirea, sumach, thimble berry, white pine, wolf berry.

In 1911, the college consulted Jensen on the placement of a statue of Martin Luther. He advised putting it on the edge of his grounds. They did.

Sources.
Luther
College
Archives,

Right, Jensen in the sunlight. Source unknown. Below, burr oaks on the Luther College campus. These are likely from Jensen's time and the upper end of his plan area. Recent Prairie photo.



Preus Library. Credit to "Jens Jensen and the Prairie School Campus of Luther College," J.R. Christianson, *The Palimpsest*, July-August 1986. Basic: Jens Jensen, *Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens*, Robert Grese, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1992.

For sale, a Midwest treasure



Bentley House In Tomah, Wisconsin

Definitive 1912 Prairie-style design by Percy Dwight Bentley. Open floor plan. 3 fireplaces. 2 bathrooms. 4 bedrooms. 3-car garage. Art glass windows. Basement with full-size windows, paneled and carpeted for office and exercise room. Distinctive exterior brick. 1977 addition, family room and garage, by Taliesin-trained architect Keith Kennedy. 2,600 total square feet. Across from a city park. NRHP eligible.

More information Art Hammond 608-372-4961.



Historic view of house.

American Farmhouses.

by Robert C. Spencer, Jr.*

The student of rural domestic architecture must be content to find his pleasure chiefly in the enjoyment of field and woods. The average American farmstead, and its weather-beaten, ramshackle, wooden buildings and unkempt surroundings, adds but a doubtful charm to the landscape. The fine old relics of colonial days, which still exist in New England and the South, were the country seats of gentlemen who had other resources than the soil. They were not farmhouses. Outside their own provincial environment they have not even served as prototypes for the homes of the real farmers whose acres are their sole support.

Disregarding such pioneer makeshifts as the log cabin, the "dug-out" and the "dobe" hut, we have, in the United States, a vast territory presenting every diversity of climate, topography, and vegetation, over which is thinly scattered some six million flimsy wooden farmhouses. Besides these, in the older and richer farming communities, there may be, all told, possibly fifteen thousand well-built, comfortable, roomy houses of wood, stone, or brick, which have some characteristic architectural or pictorial charm, adding color and pleasing interest to their natural environment, and offering suggestion and inspiration to the architect.

Even in the rich farming sections of the older States, there are many rural habitations so brutally bald, ugly, and forbidding that it may be said of our own

benighted heathen, still deaf to the gospel of beauty, that they live in a land "where every prospect pleases and only man is vile."

Amid the freshness and beauty of the fair open country, one cheerless or unsightly house seems, by contrast, more discreditable to a highly civilized and progressive race than a whole row of them in a city.



SKETCH BY R. C. SPENCER, JR.

Illustrations. A list in the sequence shown, with the original captions. Photographs (apparently), uncredited: Farmstead near Topham, Maine; old shingled barn, Phippsburg, Maine; farmhouse near La Grange, Illinois; farmhouse on Kennebec River below Bath, Maine. Sketches by Spencer of three unidentified farmhouses. Sketches and floor and site plans by Spencer for: a southern farmhouse, a Wisconsin farmhouse, a lakeside farmhouse, a fieldstone farmhouse. Of these, the fieldstone farmhouse also appeared with Spencer's article "The Farmhouse Problem" in the 1900 exhibition catalogue of the Chicago Architectural Club.

Poverty and struggle are not alone accountable for poor housing. Many a countryman who is well-to-do, even wealthy, lives in a most primitive and comfortless fashion. The average farmer, more especially in the rougher parts of the South and West, does not know how to live. He and his, toil hard and get little of the higher side of life in return. Having the same social instincts and needs as other men, he isolates himself in the midst of a large tract of land, and during the long winter months, when there is little outdoor work to do, he and his

unfortunate family are often shut in like hermits, and cut off from convenient intercourse with their fellows, to drag out a dull, depressing, animal existence amid bare and ugly surroundings. Often the children cannot even attend school. In most European countries,—doubtless, as a result of the feudal system,—where for mutual support and defense the homes of the serfs and dependents were grouped near the manor or castle, the lonely isolated farmhouse is less common. In France, England, Russia, and Scandinavia the owners or workers of a number of farms group their houses in a little hamlet with its school, its church, and its smithy, going out in all directions each morning to the distant fields or vineyards, and returning at dark to chat awhile after the evening meals with friends and neighbors, talking politics or indulging in mild gossip.

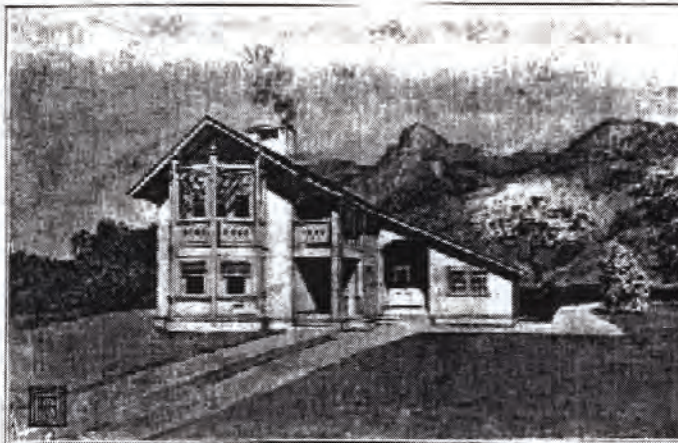
* Originally in *The Brickbuilder*, September 1900. Copyrighted by Robert C. Spencer, Jr.

Robert Spencer and the farmhouse

The same communal arrangement was forced upon our early New England settlers by the hostilities of the Indian tribes, and on the outskirts of the smaller cities and towns still remain many delightful examples of Colonial farmhouse architecture. But with the banishment and subjugation of the Indians, and the

beginning of the era of settlement upon government lands, with its requirement of five years' actual residence thereon before title could be established, the lonely isolate farmhouse became common. In the "Western Reserve," in the South, and in Michigan and Wisconsin it was at first built of logs. Farther west on the prairies it was a cheap shelter built of pine lumber or merely a sod house constructed from the humble material nearest at hand. On the Pacific slope, with its kindly climate, the simplest and rudest housing sufficed. These were the homes of the pioneers. The day of the log house is passing, and the sawmill has long been at work devouring the forests for lumber to ship to farms cleared originally in the midst of the virgin woods. The sod house and the "shack" are but temporary makeshift shelters, and the cheap frame house is taking their place to remain until the era of wood makes way for the era of brick and stone.

Each generation will see better and more substantial buildings on our farms; but while the present system of single isolated habitations so widely prevails, the old difficulty of keeping the boys on the farm will remain, and there will be no little diminution in the stream of fresh blood which the cities, vampire-like, draw from the country. And never was there greater needs than now to make rural life attractive to the children of the farms. The glimpses of the great, alluring world, gotten through visits to the nearest towns, through study at school and the reading of books and papers, impel the restless, eager youth, weary he knows not why, not of the mere grind of toil, but of the heart and soul starvation that is part of a life without recreation or beauty. The country is not everywhere beautiful. Amid the hills of New England, or the mountains of Tennessee, the rudest



"A Southern Farmhouse." Brickbuilder, September 1900.

mind is conscious of nature's loveliness. But what of the endless sweep of prairies where even the wild-flowers, by endless multiplication, become as weeds, and the horizon line is broken only by a few farmsteads with their straw stacks, windmills, and puny trees? As seen from a railway train the prairie farmhouse is as lonely as a passing craft at sea. The shimmering

corn fields and floor-like meadows stretch away to the horizon's circle, and the farmsteads, with their clumps of trees, are like islands dotted wide upon a boundless ocean. There is a certain vastness and freedom there as of the sea, but the great everlasting flatness has no feature of interest, no focal point of natural beauty or grandeur to rest the eye. There is, indeed, the beauty of the skies, and the play of light and shadow, sunshine and storm, over the great level. The rain passes, and in the west a rifted cloud opens at the touch of one slant ray, and far out upon the gloomy plain a golden finger touches the earth, and a windmill gleams wet against the rumbling darkness, as the thunder rolls and the tassels of the corn bow gently before the dying wind.

Winter comes, and the prairie is a frozen waste, across which the bitter winds drift the stinging snow-dust, until every flimsy, wooden farmhouse shivers on its foundation, if, mayhap, it have any foundation better than posts driven into the ground a banking of dirt and leaves. When the thawing weather comes the unspeakable roads of bottomless muck stand out black against the surrounding snow, and travel is well-nigh impossible. And the homes themselves,—what do they offer of comfort and beauty? We all know them, and the helpless poverty of ideas expressed by the average farmhouse. It is just one degree smaller and cheaper and more cheerlessly commonplace than the average mean little house which the speculative builder "puts up" in the humbler suburbs for poor clerks and working-men.

It has never occurred to their builders that even at the very small outlay to which the average farmer is confined, some pleasing effects of proportion and mass might be got, more lasting and beautiful

Robert Spencer and the farmhouse



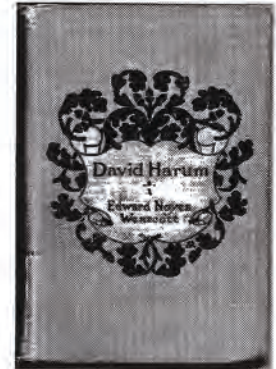
"A Southern Farmhouse." *Brickbuilder*, September 1900.

materials used, more interior comfort and more domestic conveniences planned for. The women of the household, particularly if they are of foreign origin and peasant antecedents, are literally hewers of wood and drawers of water. The pump has replaced the well with its old oaken bucket, but the pump is out in the yard and not in the kitchen. Sinks are luxuries for the few. Dish water is thrown out near the kitchen door. Probably not more than one farmhouse in twenty has a furnace or a plumbing system of any kind. In nearly every house, and this is equally true even in New England and in the thriftiest parts, one sacred room is dedicated and set apart to fashion and ceremony. It is the "parlor" idea, which runs through all modern domestic architecture, expressed here in a peculiarly absurd yet pathetic form. Shut up, unused, and frigid, except on rare occasions, musty with disuse, and its walls ghastly white or covered with some poor, pale paper, a few chromos and faded photographs in hard black frames, and all of the other evidences of poverty of taste and imagination, the so-called "best room" is cut out of the already modest ground plan, leaving the family to live in kitchen and dining room, and to eat in the former oftener than in the latter, where the atmosphere reeks of coarse cookery, stale tobacco, and dirty boots and clothing brought in by men from the fields and barns.

(Paragraph 10—see next column.) Of sanitary, bathing, or laundry conveniences there are usually none. Thousands of farmers have never heard of such things. Thousands who have heard of them and might afford them scoff at them. Housework is drudgery at all times, and during haying and harvest it is slavery. The pictures given in some of our recent fiction of hard grinding farm life with few touches of softness or beauty to relieve them are not too darkly drawn. Picture to yourself the boyhood life of a David Harum. The fiction of Hamlin Garland, Mrs. Peattie and E.V. Smalley gives no exaggerated impression of actual and common rural

Paragraph 10: Details tantalize

Yes, the 10th paragraph is tantalizing because of all it suggests. Spencer, writing for an audience in 1900, quickly cited a popular novel and three writers way out of general knowledge today. The novel, *David Harum*, *A Story of American Life*, was written by Edward Noyes Westcott and published in 1898. Born in West Salem, Wisconsin, near La Crosse, Hamlin Garland (1860-1940) was a novelist, essayist and memoirist. The others, Elia Peattie (1862-1935), writing in Omaha, and E.V. Smalley (1841-1899), did journalism.



Westcott, born in 1847, lived nearly all his life in Syracuse, New York, worked in banking and died of consumption in 1898. Here's David Harum talking, in one of those broad sometimes irritating dialects of late 19th century novels—try Zona Gale's "friendship village" stories:

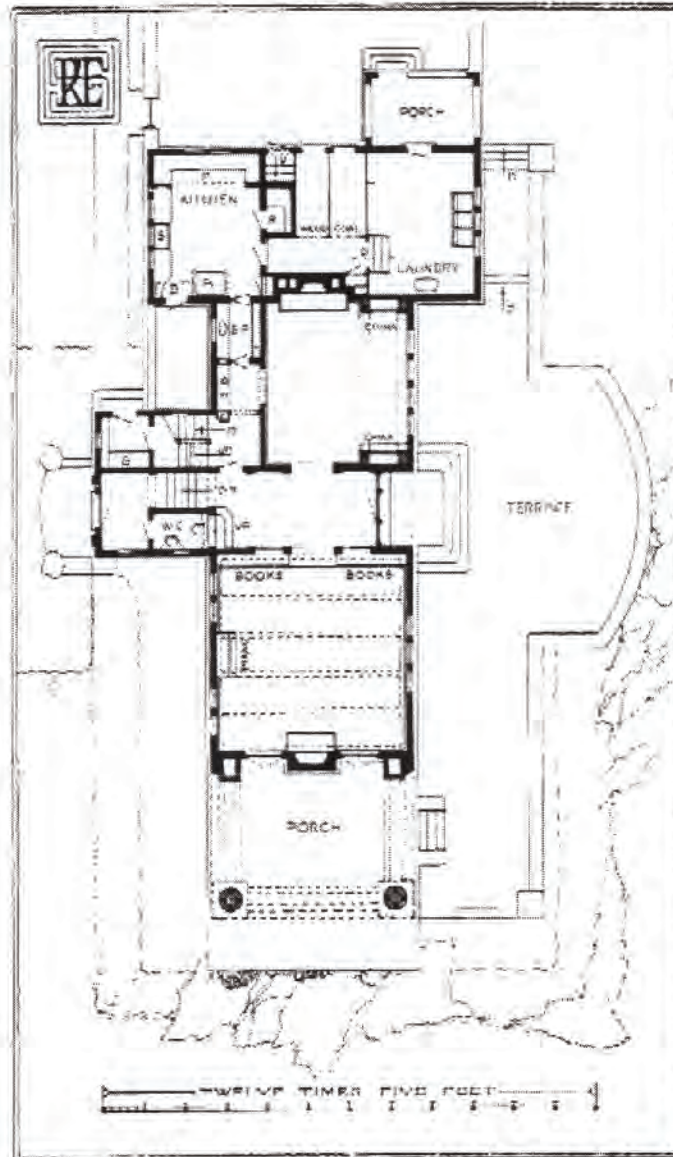
Small farmin' ain't cal'lated to fetch out the best traits of human nature an keep 'em out—an' it seems to me sometimes that when the old man wa'n't cuffin' my ears he was lickin' me with a rawhide or a strap. Fur's that was concerned, all his boys used to ketch it putty reg'lar till they got too big. One on 'em up an' licked him one night, an' lit out next day. I s'pose the old man's disposition was sp'iled by what some feller said farmin' was, 'workin' all day, an' doin' chores all night,' an' larrupin' me an' all the rest on us was about all the enjoyment he got.

Farming was hardly easy. Smalley's article "The Isolation of Life on Prairie Farms" was in the September 1893 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine. His picture was dismal. Smalley begins: "In no civilized country

**Paragraph 10:
Details**

have the cultivators of the soil adapted their home life so badly to the conditions of nature as have the people of our great Northwestern prairies." The Northwest in 1893 was what today is the Upper Midwest—Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, the Dakotas and the like nearby. Smalley's concern is the inability of farm families to socialize, given government policies encouraging settlement on a minimum of 160 acres, and the typical placing of houses in the center of this acreage, and the harsh winters, which are bad for "a frail little house of two, three, or four rooms that looks as though the prairie winds would blow it away." Such comments must have encouraged Spencer to think he could make a difference.

Sources: David Harum, *A Story of American Life*, Edward Noyes Westcott, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1898. "The Isolation of Life on Prairie Farms," E.V. Smalley, *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1893.



Spencer's "lakeside farmhouse." His Wrightian logo at upper left. Brickbuilder, September 1900.

conditions, where farms are isolated and the struggle against poverty is endless and bitter.

The Esquimaux Indian with his wood and home carving, his basket-weaving, and implementing-making has more to occupy and develop his creative faculties than the toilers of the prairie in whom the love of beauty and the desire to create gradually die; where the lively imagination of childhood is starved and dwarfed by the hard reality of a one-sided material existence. To one of those warped and undeveloped natures art is a strange and foreign thing, to be mistrusted and shunned because not understood; because enjoyed and patronized by the favored rich and the idle-born; a thing for weak women and lazy men.

From infancy the child of the farm must be taught to truly see form and color, the mind to understand, the imagination to create, and the hands to do it for the pure pleasure of doing. In the country isolation must cease, houses must draw together about the schoolhouse as a center, and there must be the children have the beneficent teaching of the kindergarten, the spirit of which should not be withdrawn as the pupils pass from childhood, but should pervade all the years of schooling. Loving beauty, knowing its value in life, sensitive to its myriad beauty, knowing its value in life, sensitive to its myriad forms, the farmer of the future will then value beautiful surroundings as well as bountiful crops. Realizing the benefits and advantages of combination and cooperation, he will work intelligently for the development of little communities, wherein, by united effort, comfort and conveniences of living, now rare, may be enjoyed by all. On the industrial side of his calling he will perfect such combinations of capital and of business interests as to make the earning of an independent and comfortable living a certainty for the

Robert Spencer and the farmhouse

reasonably careful and industrious. Trusts and the "plutocrats" will no longer be his bugbears, and his sons will no longer seek the city in search of uncertain fortunes. Among the factors working toward these improved conditions of rural life are the efforts of educators to improve country schools, and to make them more available

to the farming population; the spread of the grange idea promoting social intercourse, mutual improvement, and the cooperative idea; the establishment in the most progressive States, of farmers' institutes as a phase of state university extension; the good roads movement and the work of agricultural schools and colleges.

Finally, hundreds of thousands of agricultural and family papers are broadcast among the farmers every week, reaching many humble homes where the illustrated magazines are never seen and books are few. Some of these have well-edited columns on the arts and handicrafts, and several of the leading farm and family journals have taken up the farmhouse problem in a way which ought to do much good to awaken their subscribers to the neglected possibilities of rural life in respect to the home and its environment.

Doubtless the majority of those to first feel the force of these pleas for better homes will be the wives and daughters. In time the sterner males will yield to good and persuasive influences; and when once the movement for a really good rural architecture has begun, they may be expected to take quite as much pains to comfortably house their families as to properly shelter stock and machinery. Up to the present time the typical American country barn has been better planned and better built than the average farmhouse. In the building of barns and outhouses, as well as the construction of labor-saving agricultural machinery, Yankee skill and brains have evolved a type which, from a purely practical standpoint, is superior while it lasts to the better-built foreign models of brick and stone. Unhampered by any fear of being accused by neighbors of foolish extra-



"A Lakeside Farmhouse." Two similar later houses by George W. Maher are in Oak Park, Illinois; Pasadena, California. Brickbuilder, September 1900.

gance in building as long as the ends sought are purely "practical," without taint of aesthetic "foolishness," or weak catering to needless refinement of living, the farmers as a barn builder has been progressive and ready to spend money within the limitations of wooden construction and according to his means. It is in the

matter of the house that he has signally failed. Here his intense natural conservatism, joined to force of habit in crude ways of living, has stood in the way of progress. The journals he takes have always dealt chiefly upon the practical details of his business, leaving the home itself, the center and soul of the farm, in the rude hands of the ignorant, unprogressive country builder. Of recent years, with the perfection of cheap methods of photographic reproduction, the country has been flooded with ready-made designs for houses of every size and cost, planned for all sorts of and conditions of men except farmers. These designs are most of them so bad that it would be fortunate if the country people had escaped their blighting influence. But in the hands of the village builder they are made, with some changes in the line of cheap construction, to serve for the new homes of the wealthier and more ambitious farmers. We have all seen these fearful and wonderful structures with their ridiculous little towers and turrets, or their now antiquated mansard roofs and cupolas, betokening the exceptional prosperity and munificence of their owners. Begotten by blind custom, conceived in a commercial spirit and born of commonplace mediocrity, there is little hope for the cause of a progressive, living, native, domestic architecture in these piles of plans and elevations run off by the yard by men who care little or nothing for architecture as a fine art. The small minority of our architects who are able to design well-planned, livable, and thoroughly delightful farmhouses are as a rule too constantly and profitably employed with large and important commissions to be interested in the sort of building to which the humble means of even the wealthier farmers would confine him. So that unless the devil is fought with fire and the best ideas of our ablest designers and thinkers are placed in the hands of the

Robert Spencer and the farmhouse

farm people, the illiterate and unscrupulous plan-merchant, who never lets art interfere with business, will continue to the only architect the farmer knows until there is a larger and more intelligent demands for beauty in the home and its surroundings.

In our present intensely commercial period the village carpenter is no longer the painstaking student of the most dignified architectural precedent, as he often was in

colonial days. He makes plans in order to get "jobs," and gets all the money he can out of them. In New England, until recently, the traditions of earlier days have been followed in a humble way in farmhouse work; but now, even there, the same beastly "modern" abominations of the lathe and the band-saw are beginning to appear in all their brazen impudence.

In presenting some of my own designs for American farmhouses, as suggesting a few of the possibilities which the problem offers to the architect, a very few words of explanation will suffice. The "Fieldstone Farmhouse," the "Wisconsin Farmhouse," and the "Southern Farmhouse" (planned for the more temperate Southern regions) were recently published in two well-known farm journals, and have also appeared in several of the late architectural club catalogues and in Brush and Pencil. They were intended for rather small families, keeping not more than one servant, and would require the male help in some cases to occupy separate quarters near by, this being a good plan on very large farms where several hired hands are steadily employed. One or two men may be accommodated in the house, and would commonly be treated as members of the family, where help of a superior class can be had.

The only saving in labor and expense made possible by providing extensive quarters for help in part of a farmhouse is in heating them in winter, although even here a central steam or hot water apparatus instead of a hot air furnace would wipe out even this consideration. In the average Northern farmhouse neither the man's room nor the family bed rooms have any proper provisions for heating. Moreover, in mixed

Related articles. Spencer mentions the fieldstone, Wisconsin and southern farmhouses being published in "two well-known farm journals." I found "A Northern Farm House," in Farm, Field, and Fireside in the issue for September 9, 1899, on the cover and pages 1126-27.

communities, or where rough, menial, or uncongenial help has to be employed, the family life is much better and freer where the hands are cared for separately. There are ideal American farming communities where as many as half a dozen hired men and boys, friends or relatives of the patriarchal employer, sleep and eat together, under one roof, in the most congenial and democratic fashion,—all equals and all good, wholesome, intelligent members of one big family, in which all cooperate for the general good. Such big families require generous housing, but are the exception rather than the rule. For hired help under such conditions, a separate wing with bed rooms on the ground floor, readily increased by lengthening or adding a second story, or both, as growing needs require, seems to be the best arrangement. A one-story house gives a large attic, which, if properly lighted and ventilated, also affords generous sleeping accommodations, which may be reached by a staircase direct from the entry by the men whose goings and comings would otherwise often disturb the family. The "Lakeside Farmhouse" was designed for one of those ideal situations of which architects love to dream, and which actually do exist in many parts of America. The building is intended to accommodate several boarders or city relatives during the summer, and suggests the country house rather than the ordinary farmhouse. The separate entrance for hired help with an enclosed staircase gives them a private thoroughfare to their rooms in the attic, where rough or menial help is employed. This drawing was made primarily to show the possibilities of beautiful farmhouse sites. The "Wisconsin Farmhouse" presents the pleasing low roof lines of the story and a half cottage, yet avoids the practical shortcomings of that type; the floor beams overhang to receive the rafter thrust, while the bed rooms each with windows in two walls carried close to ceiling and fitted with casement sash gives the best possible ventilation, and insure cool rooms at night if there be any air stirring. The kitchen is simply a large alcove in the dining room. This compact arrangement completely screened from the living room makes the work very simple, everything being within easy reach; while any steam or fumes from the cooking range are cut off by a low arch about 6 ft. above the floor, and drawn off by a large ventilating register in the chimney. The rear porch may be enclosed with wire screens and meals served there in hot weather and on gala occasions, or where family and help do not mix at meals; the living room readily becomes dining room as well.

Robert Spencer and the farmhouse

In the library or office, quiet and privacy may be had for study, correspondence, receiving friends, keeping farm and household accounts, and transacting farm business.

With the exception of the Fieldstone Farmhouse in which brick might be used quite as effectively as stone, the construction is of the balloon frame type, with a covering of cement rough cast on metal lath. With some slight modifications each could be built of brick, and thereby made more durable and beautiful at a small increase of cost, which would be fully offset by the substantial and permanent character of the house thus obtained. The days of the flimsy, "clapboarded" frame house are numbered, and it is to be hoped that the farmers who seem to prefer bricks wherever they can be cheaply obtained will realize that solid brick construction, proof against weather, growing mellow rather than dilapidated with age, is the best investment in the long run.

The other illustrations, mere camera notes, present interesting and typical examples of native American, rural architecture. Note the picturesque homeliness of the northern New England type—the best built and the most clearly defined and, perhaps, the best suited to Northern conditions. Here, and occasionally in the West where New Englanders have settled, the typical farmhouse is a long rambling structure, with the sacred "parlor" and guest room at one end and the barns and workshop at the other. In Northern regions where old-fashioned winters with deep drifting snows still reign, the convenience and comfort of this type are obvious. Of course, a separate and larger barn for stock is usually required, although examples may be seen where, through various sheds, a house is united with a great barn, large enough for all purposes. A few changes in the plans of these rambling farmhouses would eliminate the most serious defects now found in even the best of these buildings. These defects, some of which are due to perverted ways of living, are: first, a connection between kitchen and barn too short or inadequately shut off against odors; second, incomplete or inconvenient laundry, fuel, pantry, and other working arrangements; fourth, and perhaps most serious of all, lack of a large, sunny, attractive living room or combined dining and living room in place of the frigid, old-fashioned state parlor held sacred to memorable occasions, such as weddings and funerals. One needed feature, seldom provided, is a roomy entry, set apart for the male members of the household in which they may remove dirty boots and overalls, and clean themselves up properly before entering the kitchen or living rooms.

Often toilet and wardrobe conveniences may be provided in the laundry.

In planning and placing a house in a sharply rolling country, such advantage of the site often may be taken as to provide easy and convenient access to the house and barn on two levels, giving an added charm to its various aspects seldom found in the level prairies.

Concerning the use of brick in the construction of American farm buildings, there is little to be said for the reason that the cheapness and availability of wooden construction have been sufficient cause hitherto for the almost universal use of wood. Scarcity of small local brick kilns and scarcity of masons have been a natural accompaniment of the abundance of saw-mill products. Substantially built farmhouses of brick are quite common in parts of Ohio and Indiana, and they will be found here and there in Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin within fifty miles of brick-making centers. Some of the most interesting examples of brick farm buildings are to be found in New England, where the English colonists brought from across the sea their predilection for substantial and enduring building materials. In order to build according to the ways of their forefathers, they took a great deal of trouble to secure bricks, either by importation, or by burning their own bricks where stone was not available or suitable for the purpose. The accompanying sketch of the old "Garrison House" or "Spencer House" at old Newbury, Mass., supposed to have been built prior to 1640, and the "Lee Farm" on the Kennebec River, below Bath, Me., represent two interesting examples, both of which are standing today as proofs of the durability of burnt clay laid in very ordinary mortar. The bricks in the "porch" (so-called) of the former are carefully molded by hand, and it is quite probable that they were imported. The walls of the "Lee Farm," now more than one hundred years old, are over two feet thick, and the bricks, to judge from their softness, were burned near by long before there were any regular kilns in the Pine Tree State.

Altogether, the farmhouse problem in this country is a most interesting one; and as the cheap and temporary houses of the first settlers and their immediate descendants fall into dilapidation and decay, it is to be hoped that we shall enter on an era of more substantial, livable, and attractive homes for the millions who till the soil and form the backbone of the nation.

House-proud families in a small place

Little Waukon, 4,000-plus people in Northwest Iowa, remembers the two Hager houses for the two women who first owned them. The owner of one of the houses, the one at 402 Allamakee Street designed by Robert C. Spencer, Jr., mentioned the story. So did a volunteer at the Allamakee County Historical Society. The story is that the Hager women vied with their houses and freely commented about residential superiority. Simply said, their message was "my house is best." This is the story that survives, the one that is part of Waukon's ethos.



Otto Hager. Courtesy, Allamakee County Historical Society.

Otto and John Hager, the brothers who would commission houses from Robert Spencer and George W. Maher, respectively, were sons of Fred and Wilhelmina (Helming) Hager, farmers in the Ludlow rurality six miles from Waukon. They had 10 brothers and sisters.

Spencer's papers not being assembled in any one place, we have no knowledge, for now, about why he was employed by the Hagers. Spencer, whose office with his partner Horace S. Powers (1872-1928) was at 1200 Steinway Hall in Chicago, had been much published by 1905 or so, with numerous articles in the Ladies' Home Journal and House Beautiful, both of which were easily available. Another possibility is Otto Hager's professional connections, he being

For more on the John and Grace Hager and their house, go to Geo. W. Maher Quarterly pages in this issue.

a little city banker knowing big city bankers.

What the Hagers wanted. We find the young Otto Julius Hager and Sarah Ellen Stevens caught up in numbers. He was born in 1867, she in 1869. Her father was a farmer, too, an early settler. They both attended local schools. Otto went to Decorah, 20 miles away, to the Breckenridge Institute, a school for teachers. He studied there for three years and then taught for four years. Sarah Ellen, likely already just Ella, as she would be known, was bookkeeping in Waukon. In the 1890s, Otto was one of the organizers of the First National Bank in Waukon. In September 1899, Otto and Ella got their marriage license. They married at her parents' home. "The wedding was a very quiet affair only relatives being present," The Waukon Republican reported September 26, 1899. He was 32, she 30. They honeymooned in Omaha and were to be at home in the Grand hotel after October 10. Otto's siblings married, too; four sisters, Mary Sophie, Annie, Emma and Clara, married Opfers. Life settled. In 1901, Ella, along with her future sister-in-law Grace Falby, was an organizer of the Browning Club, a woman's cultural and study club named for the poet Robert Browning. Ella was secretary-treasurer. The bank was prospering. So, we're guessing, the Hagers, married a half dozen or so years, wanted prestige. They bought the lot at 402 Allamakee for \$1,500 on March 22, 1907.

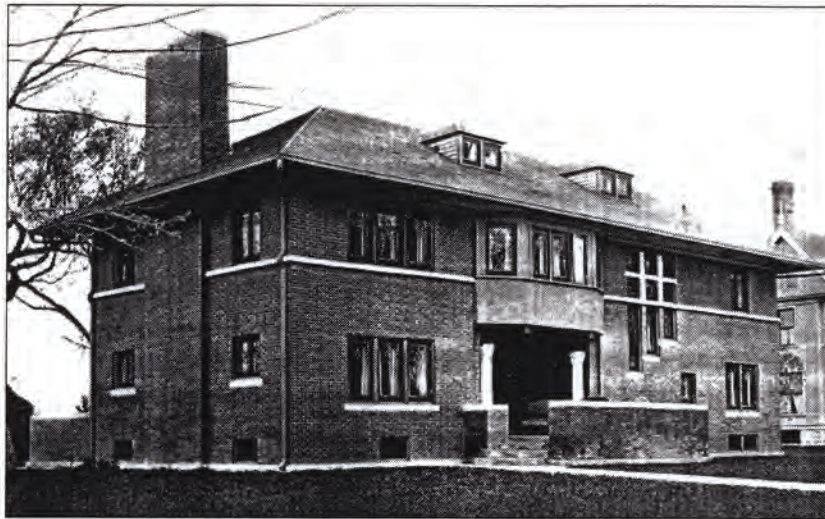
What the Hagers got. As you can read from what's gone before here and what follows, social history, material culture, is as much the interest here as architecture. Even so, the Hager House is at the center. By August 12, 1907, Otto and Ella had specifications from Robert Spencer who in his early 40s was their contemporary. Construction was well under way by summer 1908. "The new O.J. Hager residence has also recently been surrounded with fine walks and curbing," the Waukon Standard reported on August 12, 1908. The contractor was Gus Hansmeier of Waukon.



Spencer

The house is a rectangle. The construction is rubble stone foundation, brick piers, steel beams and a Norway pine frame, covered with a veneered exterior surface of regular-sized, red Monona brick, as well as inch-thick stucco, buff-colored, on Cleveland corrugated metal lath from the Garry Iron & Steel Co.,

Spencer and Hagers in Waukon



Spencer's Hager House, front and back. Note position next to Queen Anne-style house, banding, abrupt dormers. Western Architect.



Cleveland, at the entrance. The windows are casements with tulip motif, Spencer's favored motif. Floors are quarter-sawn white oak. Trim is white oak, poplar, yellow pine and maple. The bathrooms have hexagon floor tile from the Zanesville Mosaic Tile Co. and cream white English tile on the walls. More descriptive details are in the adequate nomina-

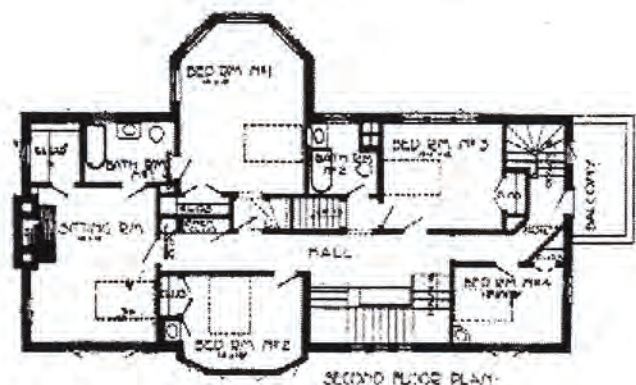
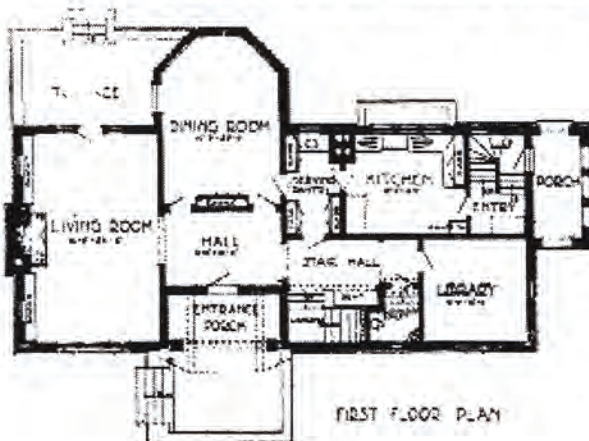
tion for the National Register of Historic Places, which draws heavily on Spencer's specifications.

Locals impressed. They were. Here's the Waukon Democrat on December 30, 1908: "Mr. And Mrs. O.J. Hager moved into their palatial new home last week in time to partake of their Christmas dinner therein. A portion of the house is still receiving its finishing touches, during which they will occupy a few of the rooms only. It will be as handsomely a finished home as is to be found anywhere when completed." The next day, December 31, 1908, the Waukon Standard reported: "Mr. And Mrs. O.J. Hager have moved into their new home on Allamakee street, probably the most modern, up-to-date house in the city."

Impression lingers. Five years or so later, in an Allamakee County history, one of those, and there are many, with a biographical section, the section on Otto included this: "They occupy a modern and beautiful residence in Waukon which Mr. Hager erected and which they have made a center for their charming

circle of friends."

Later with Otto and Ella. In July 1912, a photo of the Hager House was in The Western Architect. By 1913, when the county history was written, the Hagers had their first daughter, Anna. Their second



Spencer and Hagers in Waukon

daughter was Helen. The 1913 county history says that Otto was president of the First National Bank, as well as of the nearby Waterville Savings Bank, and also vice president of the New Albin Savings Bank, and a stockholder and director for the Dorchester Savings Bank. He was also in real estate and owned farm properties, improved and unimproved. Otto was estimable, "a man of high worth and sterling integrity." In 1915 he contributed playground equipment for the public schools, swings, rings, climbing ropes, slide poles, chain ladders, merry-go-round and more. In November 1916, the Waukon Democrat reported that the First National had \$1 million in assets—a pinnacle moment.

Catastrophe. It came 11 years later, when a federal grand jury in Dubuque indicted Otto for embezzlement and he was arrested on December 14, 1927, in Waukon. His bank and two other banks had closed earlier. Otto admitted to an infraction of banking laws but claimed this was because of his error. The Waukon Democrat seemed exultant: "We were confident that both the government and the state banking departments would give the three closed banks, a thorough investigation in due time, and if criminality was apparent, those accountable would not be spared arrest and persecution." Otto's brother John posted the \$3,000 bond.

Post-catastrophe. Eventually, Otto was acquitted in federal court of the embezzlement charge. Hager relatives told the owner that Otto and Ella sold their furnishings to pay depositor claims. There is conjecture that they were despondent and reclusive. I found them going about, attending a "right joyous post-nuptial surprise and parcel shower" in Postville in September 1930. Depositor claims continued: a \$2,919.69 judgment for the estate of Emil J. Schukel in 1937, a \$5,802.48 judgment for the estate of Fred Klein in 1937. In 1936, the Hagers were unable to pay their property taxes. Money troubles, money troubles: friends and daughter Anna helped, she repaying \$124.90 in taxes in 1941. A newspaper story had the Hagers at a funeral in Postville in January 1943 for Mabel Moore and her daughter who died from being burned when their home stove exploded. The Hagers stayed in their Spencer house through the mid-1940s, at least.

Post-mortem. Otto died at 82 in October 1949, and the Waukon Democrat response was a two-paragraph obituary on page 1. Six nephews, a Ludeking, two Hagers, two Opfers and a Stark, were the pallbearers.



Otto and Ella Hager granite markers in Waukon's Oakland cemetery, both in her family plot. Prairie.



Ella, 83, "died in her sleep" (Waukon Democrat, May 7, 1953, obituary, four paragraphs) in Ames where she'd been living for two years, enjoying "the company of her daughter, Mrs. O.E. Tauber, and her two grandsons, Tommy and Jackie Tauber." The other daughter, now Mrs. H.M. Giff, lived in Ithaca, New York. The obituarist concluded that Ella was remembered for "her special interest in birds and nature lore. She enjoyed the study of birds for many years and became an amateur authority, often consulted locally concerning Iowa birds as well as visiting migrants." Otto and Ella are buried in Waukon's Oakland cemetery in the plot of her parents, Peter and Julianna Stevens. Their low granite markers face away from the Stevens stones.

Ames stop. Looking for Otto and Ella Hager's daughter Anna, we visited Ames, Iowa, and its public library. At the innards, reached down corridor after corridor and up a few stairs in the old library and additions, we were amongst historical documents. We knew the daughter lived there. City directories showed that Otto Tauber was a professor at Iowa State



Anna Hager Tauber.

Hagers in Waukon, movie director from Menominee, Michigan

College (now University), and that he and Hager daughter Anna, calling herself the more modern Anne, lived in a new winding-street neighborhood on Ames's west side. A college yearbook had Otto Tauber as chair of zoology and entomology. In 1962 Anne was a biology teacher at the Ames senior high school. Anna died in 1964, Oscar in 1982.

Sources (alphabetically). Abstract, 402 Allamakee Street, Waukon, Iowa, June 19, 1945, later. Otto and Sarah (Ella) Hager family: First National Bank advertisement, Waukon



Living room view from Spencer's Hager House toward Maher's Hager House—visible through left window.

Democrat, weekly in 1905. "Hager-Stevens Wedding," Waukon Republican, September 26, 1899. "Otto Hager Rites Held Thursday," Waukon Democrat, October 20, 1949. O.J. Hager (photos of Hager and his house), Past and Present of Allamakee County, Ellery M. Hancock, S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago, 1913. Otto and Ella Hager ownership, compiled by Mary Jane White, letter to Paul Kruty, September 14, 2002. "Last Rites for Mrs. Otto Hager," Waukon Democrat, May 7, 1953. Local news, variously, Waukon Democrat, June 7, 1905; Waukon Standard about the house, August 12, 1908, December 30, 1908, December 31, 1908; and Waukon newspapers, September 8, 1915. "Marriage Licenses", Waukon Standard, October 4, 1899.

Architecture. Otto and Ella Hager House, photo, Western Architect, July 1918. Spencer and Powers, Chicago, preliminary specifications, undated; specifications for earth, mason, lath and plaster, tile and sheet metal work for Otto and Ella Hager House, August 12, 1907. The Prairie School in Iowa, Richard Guy Wilson, Sidney K. Robinson, The Iowa State University Press, Ames, 1977.

General. Otto J. Hager House nomination for National Register of Historic Places. Iowa property rehabilitation tax credit application, parts one and two, Mary Jane White, Waukon, September 21, 2002.



"Mitchell Leisen about the time he arrived in Hollywood," which was 1919 when he was 20 or 21. Photo, Hollywood Director, 1973.

U.P. start

Movie luminary (James) Mitchell Leisen was born October 6, 1898, at 1330 Main in Menominee, Michigan, in the lower Upper Peninsula of Michigan. His parents were James and Mabel



Site of the James and Mabel Leisen House in Menominee, Michigan. Now a park. Prairie photo.

More Leisen



Grandfather's house, a Gothic-2nd Empire piece partly responsible for progressive architecture. Menominee, Mich., Illustrated.

Leisen. Mitchell's father was a bookkeeper, presumably for his father, Jacob, owner with his son-in-law of the Leisen and Henes Brewery. Visiting Menominee on a snowy day, we found that 1330 Main (now First Street) is gone, replaced by a small wooded park facing Lake Michigan. So was the nearby extravagant home of Mitchell's grandparents, she being Verena, which had a twin next door occupied by the Leisens' daughter Rosa and her husband John Henes. On the surface, the absence of these houses nullifies the reason for including Leisen here, which is to show where progressive people lived, and how that might have influenced them.

Mitchell wasn't in Menominee for long, his mother leaving her husband and whisking her child away to St. Louis "in search of a

better life for her son." She divorced James and remarried. When Mitchell was five, Mabel had surgery done on his club foot, which left him limping and apparently introverted for several years. As a boy, Leisen liked making models of theaters and arranging flowers. Parents sent him to a military school to undo his unmanly tendencies. He attended at Washington University in St. Louis and worked, briefly, for Marshall and Fox, a Chicago architectural firm. On to Holly-



A 1919 film providing Leisen's first job. IMDB.

wood: during a vacation there in 1919 he was hired by Cecil B. DeMille to design Gloria Swanson's Babylonian



Still from *Dynamite*. Oscar web site.

costumes for *Male and Female*; used his schooling as art director for 21 movies; received an Oscar nomination for interior decoration for



Best? To Each....

Dynamite in 1929; and directed 46 movies between 1933-67,



Golden Earrings.

including *To Each His Own* with Olivia de Havilland in 1946 and *Golden Earrings* with Marlene Dietrich in 1947. His progressivism was ready adoption and adaptation of new styles.

Leisen died in 1972 at the Motion Picture Country Home and Hospital in Woodland Hills, California, a Los Angeles suburb, of

"coronary problems." He'd been living there since 1970 after being hospitalized for gangrene in his left leg, which was amputated. Leisen's New York Times obituary listed more accomplishments: designer and decorator of homes, pioneer pilot, sculptor, owner and operator of a Beverly Hills men's clothing store. There was no mention of Menominee. Surely someone in the U.P. was sad and remembering.

Sources. Behind the Screen: How Gays and Lesbians Shaped Hollywood, 1910-1969, William J. Mann, Penguin USA, 2002. Hollywood Director, the Career of Mitchell Leisen, David Chierchetti, Curtis Books, New York, 1973. "Mitchell Leisen," World Film Directors, Vol. 1, John Wakeman, H.W. Wilson Company, New York, 1987. Mitchell Leisen birth certificate, recorded June 3, 1899, Menominee County clerk's office. "Mitchell Leisen, Director, Dies; 'To Each His Own' Among Films," from UPI in New York Times, November 1, 1972. Menominee, Mich., Illustrated, The Art Gravure & Etching Co., Milwaukee, 1891.

Note. Mann says Leisen graduated from Washington University. I called the university archives March 27, 2003, and there was no such record. A librarian suggested that Leisen may have taken classes at the university art school.

Buck's Moeng House

Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood, once a separate North Shore Chicago community, is a busy crowded place today.

In the early 1900s, Rogers Park was considerably less full of apartment buildings and shops, and the Edward and Helen Moeng House was wonderfully placed at the east end of Columbia Avenue next to Lake Michigan.

Designed by Lawrence Buck, the Moeng House, 1054 Columbia, was thought unusual. "A Lake Shore Residence of Novel Exterior" was the headline for two pages in Hermann Valentin von Holst's *Modern American Homes*. What was uncommon was the use of lake-washed rocks to cover the outside of what must have been a wood-frame house. Von Holst, perhaps inclined toward the picturesque or romantic, described the material as "pebbles from the beach." Here are some of the other details in two paragraphs of text: Gray-green tile on the roof, trim "stained brown to match the color of the branches of the trees," a rose motif in the art glass windows, a living room fireplace with "a copper hood finished verde antique" and "inset with a panel of glass mosaic," a circular corner window in the living room, living room and hall birch woodwork stained gray brown. Von Holst says the house cost \$14,000 in 1909. Besides von Holst's two pages, the Moeng House is in Marian White's *Book of the North Shore*, both volumes, 1910 and 1911.

What interests me are the several porches opening the house, which is a rectangle, and drawing it into the natural surrounding, and providing lakeviews, as do the circular window and many other window groupings



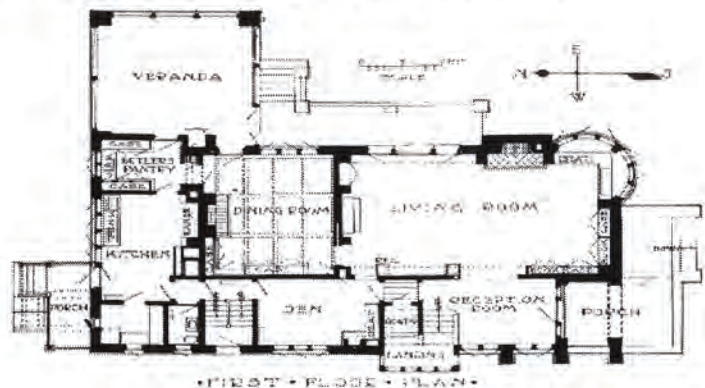
Exterior, toward Lake Michigan. *Book of North Shore*.

facing east; also, the various lights emphasizing square designs; the built-in bookcases in the living room and seats in the living room and den; and the planting above the entrance and around the corner, all of which would seem to have required some exceptional effort to water. Two things particularly interest me. One is the large stairwell window. From Columbia Avenue, this window would have been dominant because it rose from mid-first story all the way to

the eave, and consisted of decorative wood framing and rose-motif windows on the sides and front. Von Holst says this window "has a leaded glass design of a rose tree in soft tones of green and rose white." The other special interest for me is the wall painting evident in the "reception room." This is an emphatic but delicate design. Overall, the house is in the arts



Above, other side; below, first floor plan. von Holst.



More Buck's Moeng House, books, notes



Moeng living room. von Holst.
and crafts style.

Married in 1886, the Moengs had no children and lived alone in the house. There were servants. Buck's plan includes a back stairway and a maids room with closet and a sink, then called a "lavatory," on the second floor. Born in Chicago in 1856,



Moeng entrance hall. von Holst.

Moeng went to public schools. By age 15 or 16, he was an errand boy for Zeese & Rand, an electrotypewriter business, and then "after the fire," with Zeese & Rand, successor to A. Zeese. The "fire," as knowingly referred to in *The Book of Chicagoans* for 1923, was the devastating Chicago fire of 1871. In 1872, Moeng left Zeese "to learn the plumbing trade," plumbed for four years, rejoined Zeese in 1876 for an apprenticeship as an electrotypewriter, joined Blomgren Bros. from 1882-89, returned

to A. Zeese & Co., which was organized as Franklin Engraving and Electrotyping Co. and in 1905 became the Franklin Co., with Moeng as manager and president. So he was of substance by the time his Columbia Avenue house was built. Moeng was a member of the Chicago Athletic and Lake Shore clubs and a Mason.

In 1909, Lawrence Buck was living on the same block of

Columbia Avenue, close by to superintend his work. Buck's office was downtown in the Loop at 17 Van Buren..

Today, 1054 Columbia is an apartment building. The Lake Michigan views are fine. The Moeng House is gone.

Sources. "A Lake Shore Residence of Novel Exterior," *Country and Suburban Homes of the Prairie School Period* (originally *Modern American Homes*), Hermann Valentin von Holst, Dover Publications, New York, 1982. Moeng entry, *The Book of Chicagoans*, 1923. *Chicago City Directory*, 1908, 1910, 1917, 1923.

Books, film

- In *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*, Frederick Spotts mentions "the craven efforts of the Bauhaus leaders Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to find Nazi patronage," notes New York Times critic John Rockwell. 456 pages, The Overlook Press, \$37.50.
- Film: "My Architect," by Nathaniel Kahn, son or architect Louis Kahn and a mistress, includes interviews with I.M. Pei, Frank Gehry. And, "Sullivan's Banks," from German filmmaker Heinz Emigholz, exterior and interiors of Midwest banks by Louis Sullivan in the early 20th century.
- *Wrightscape: Frank Lloyd Wright's Landscape Designs*, Charles E. and Berdeana Aguar, \$45, McGraw-Hill. Wright's career in landscape design.
- *Frank Lloyd Wright: Graphic Design*, Penny Fowler, Pomegranate. Fowler, former administrator of the Fine and Decorative Arts Collections of the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives in Scottsdale, Arizona, brings new material about Wright.

Notes

- Prizes: Pritzker, \$100,000 and bronze medallion to a Dane, Jorn Utzon, 84, architect of the Sydney Opera House (1957-1973). New Driehaus Prize for Classical Architecture, \$100,000 and a sculpture, to Leon Krier (born 1946), born in Luxemburg, resident in Southern France.

Sales & changes

- Offered: Robert Seyfarth-designed house, 808 Willow Road, Winnetka, Illinois. Last seen advertised at \$1,750,000. Seyfarth was a longtime draftsman for George W. Maher in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Calendar, small town high school, Strick House

• Threatened but saved: Frank Lloyd Wright's Glasner House (1905), Glencoe, Illinois, considered a possible tear-down by a developer who wanted its one-acre site for new houses, but saved by a buyer who wants to live in it.



Seyfarth's 808 Willow Road. Web.

ments of a Style." Art Institute of Chicago.

May 26, 2003.

Ten Chimneys opening, 1920s era home of actors Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, for touring after \$12.5 million restoration and new visitor center. Reserve 262-968-4110.

Through June 1, 2003, "Edward Hopper: The Paris Years." Between 1906-10, American artist Hopper (1882-1967) made three long visits to Paris, painted bridges, cathedrals and apartment houses. Exhibition organized by Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Through June 14, 2003. "City," photographs by Bauhaus-influenced Madeleine Isom. ArchiTech Gallery, Chicago.

September 15, 2003-January 4, 2004. "Art Deco 1910-1939," Ruhlmann, Hoffmann, Gio Ponti, from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Royal Ontario Museum, London, then San Francisco, Boston.

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Small town. *The Owen (Wisconsin) High School (1921, Thorp, Alban and Fisher, St. Paul, Minnesota, architects) will be nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. Collegiate Gothic, with arts and crafts details—core arches like those by George W. Maher, Chicago.*

Strick House update

Abridged from the Los Angeles Conservancy web site: "Located at 1911 La Mesa Drive in Santa Monica, the Strick House is the only single-family residential project completed by master architect Oscar Niemeyer in North America. The Strick family recently sold the property and the new owner, unaware of its architectural importance, planned to demolish the house and build another on the site. Niemeyer is one of the foremost modern architects of the 20th century... recipient of the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize... The Conservancy's Modern Committee alerted the Santa Monica Landmarks Commission to both the existence of the Strick House and the possible threat... Although the new owner was not aware of its architectural significance when he purchased the house, he has more recently been exploring alternatives to demolition... Recently, the owner entered into a signed agreement with the city committing not to demolish the building until its status as a landmark can be determined."

Calendar

Through April 20, 2003, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, "Debating American Modernism, Stieglitz, Duchamp and the New York Avant-Garde." Early 20th century dialogue on the new nature of art. A few Marsden Hartleys, a couple of Charles Demuths, one of Duchamp's urinal fountains, building-inspired metal and wood assemblages by John Storrs, Man Ray. In five galleries, the show seems small and underexplained for the nonguided, nonaudioed visitor. Organized by American Federation of Arts, New York. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. *Next:* May 10-August 3, 2003, Des Moines Art Center.

April 26-June 29, 2003. "Design, Vienna 1890s-1930s," Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956), others, from the collection of Barbara Mackey Kaerwer; lectures. Elvehjem Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin.

Through April 28, 2003. "Less is Less: The 70s, a Decade of Demolition," lost historic buildings in Milwaukee, photographed by Alan Magayne-Roshak. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Through May 18, 2003,.

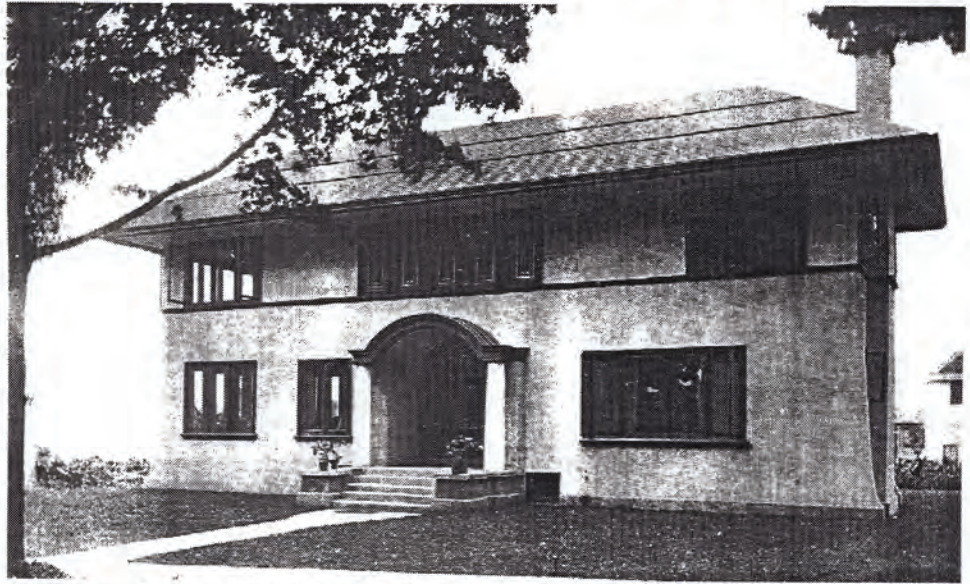
• "The Gilded Age: Treasures from the Smithsonian American Art Museum." Huge amounts of money made big houses and art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. 60 works by Childs Hassam, Winslow Homer, H. Siddons Mowbray. Cleveland Museum of Art.
• "David Adler, Architect: The Ele-

Some updating for Maher's Hager House & its builders

This one's the John and Grace Hager House designed by George W. Maher. We have varied new information. Considerable information has appeared in the Geo. W. Maher Quarterly for July-September 1997. This and all back issues are available; for more information, write us. Or email donjohn@chorus.net.

Family news. John and Grace were a family—no children. Personal items follow. John was born on his parents' farm near Waukon on August 30, 1871. Grace Falby was born in Burlington, Vermont, on May 6, 1877. At 26, John joined the 49th Iowa Volunteer Infantry in April, 1898, and was discharged the following March; this was the time of the Spanish-American War. In 1899, this in the Waukon Standard, about John's business, which was originally selling farm machinery and buggies, and later Buicks: "John Hager is removing his farm machinery stock temporarily into the old Britain ware

house, as he is going to build a two story machinery depot between Simenson & Peterson's and J.S. Johnson's machine shops, with a 45 foot front and 80 feet deep, the present building being utilized for the rear portion of the new structure." In 1901, before her marriage to John, Grace Falby was the first president of the newly organized Browning Club for Waukon



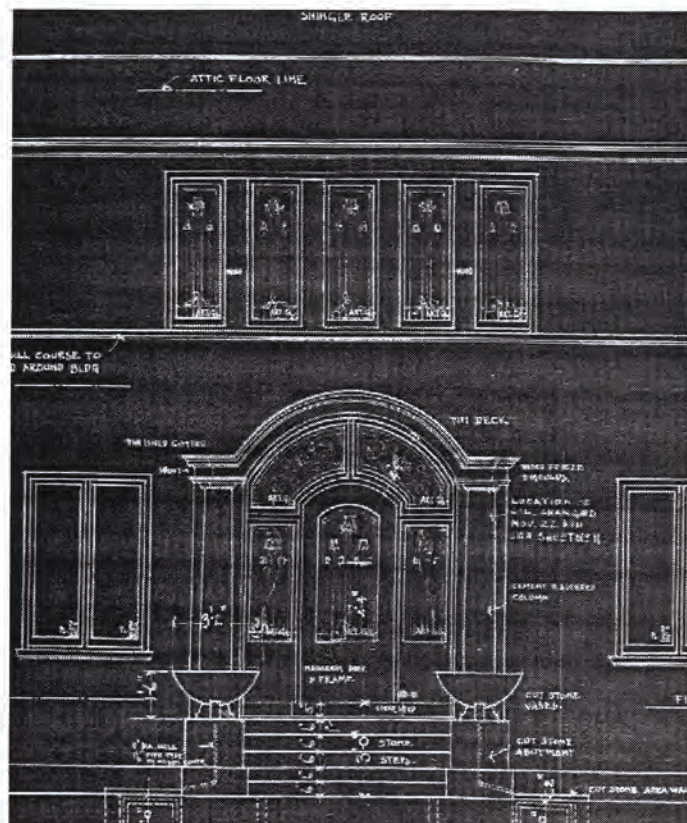
Early view of Maher's Hager House. The Western Architect, March 1914.



Younger John Hager, farm implement and auto dealer turned Iowa state legislator. Photos, courtesy present owners.



Talented and elegant Grace Hager, in an entirely fashionable dress and pose. The Hagers were often photographed when visiting Chicago.



Maher's 1911 exterior drawing for his Hager House. The specified urns were not done. Courtesy, present owners.

women. John and Grace married in July 1905 at the Cumberland Presbyterian church before 200 guests. The ushers were two Howes, a Ludeking and an Opfer, and Grace's attendants, a Ludeking, a Carpenter and a Howe (for more on some of these names, as well as John's family, see the story on Otto and Ella Hager). Grace entered with her mother, Jennie Beeman, remarried after Grace's father Charles died. John and Grace took a short bridal trip and then were "at home to their friends" at the Allamakee Hotel.

House news. Maher's plans for the house are dated October 4, 1911, for only the basement, and December 12, 1911, for the rest of the house. The house address, 17 4th Avenue, Northeast, was entered in the Allamakee County tax records in 1912. Based on other research and information from the second owners of the house, Robert and Marian Hager, I previously dated the house as being started in 1913 and finished in 1914.

More family news. A newspaper story in 1915 said, "J.H. Hager and wife left Saturday for a two weeks absence over at Michigam where Mrs. Ruby Ratcliffe

Gurnett has a summer home." In 1924, John, a Republican was elected an Iowa state representative. The only candidate on the ballot, he received 4,097 votes. Democrat Ove Roe got 33 write-in votes. Allamakee County is traditionally conservative. In 1927, John posted a \$3,000 bond after his brother Otto was arrested on a charge of embezzling money. In 1927, he was reelected as a state representative. From 1929-32, John was a state senator.

Obituaries & on to Oakland. John, 80, died June 10, 1952, at the Waukon Hospital after more than five weeks there. Grace survived as well as two of his sisters married to Opfers. The Waukon Democrat described him as a "widely known citizen." He was given credit for civic affairs. He had been a Mason for 50 years, a Shriner, charter member of the Golf and Kiwanis clubs. He was a trustee of the Presbyterian church when he died. Grace remained in their Maher house after John's death. She rented the upstairs as an apartment. After her death in 1959, the Waukon Republican-Standard boldfaced an obituary paragraph about her women's club activities, including being president of the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs in 1945. Grace was a 50-year member of the Order of Eastern Star. She was on the Waukon public library board when she died. She was organist at

First Presbyterian for 20 years. "She and Mr. Hager enjoyed travel and had made many interesting trips," the obituarist wrote.

A sister, one of her five siblings, survived. Their Oakland cemetery markers are brass and tight to the ground; they are buried next to members of the



John and Grace Hager graves in Waukon's Oakland cemetery. GWMQ.



Geo. W. Maher Quarterly

Beeman family.

Sources. John and Grace Hager family: "Funeral Service for John Hager Held on Thursday," Waukon Democrat, June 12, 1952. Interview, Paul Laiblin with Jean Hager, daughter of Robert and Marian Hager, May 12, 2002. Interviews, Donald Aucutt with Robert and Marian Hager, June 30, 1989, October 7, 1989, both in the Hager House. "June Weddings, Falby-Hager," Waukon Democrat, July 21, 1905. "Last Rites for Mrs. Hager Today at Oakland Cem.," Waukon Republican-Standard, June 9, 1959. Letter, Donald Aucutt to Robert and Marian Hager, October 2, 1989. Local news, Waukon Standard, September 27, 1899. "Republicans Offer Most Efficient Ticket," Waukon Republican and Standard, October 29, 1924.

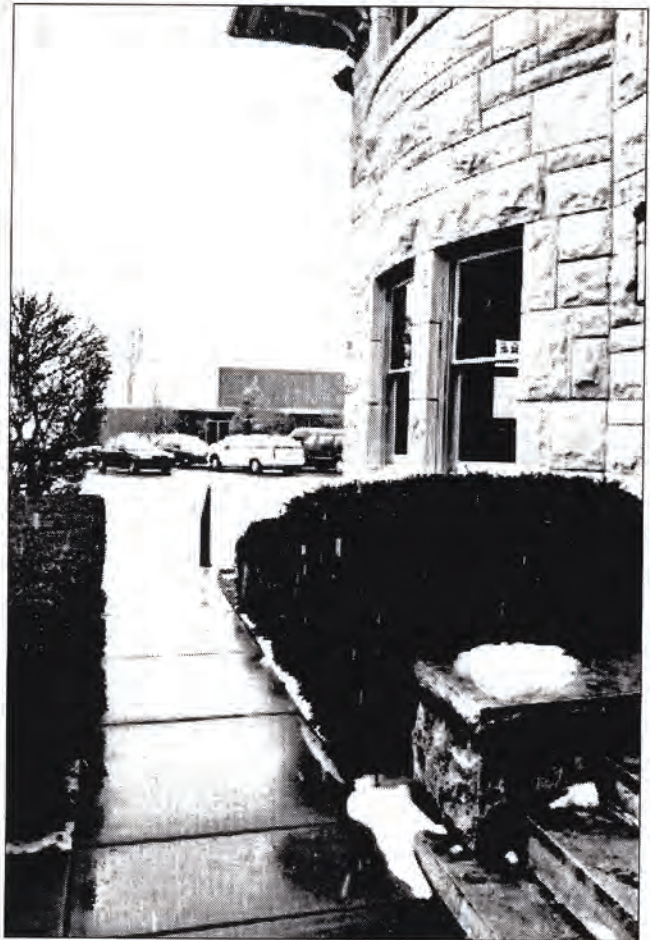
Architecture. John and Grace Hager House, photo, Western Architect, March 1914. George W. Maher, Chicago, plans, 1911.



Aged Grace Hager with son of Bob and Nea Lubben, her renters. Courtesy, present owners.

Read in a newspaper

Here from the February 15-16 Madison (Wisconsin) Capital Times: "We provide crisp white cotton linens on Stearns and Foster pillow-top mattresses, fresh flowers in bathrooms... warm chocolate chip cookies and milk delivered to each room at bedtime—all in a beautiful, comfortable Prairie Style mansion." It's the Stewart House (1905-06) in Wausau, Wisconsin.

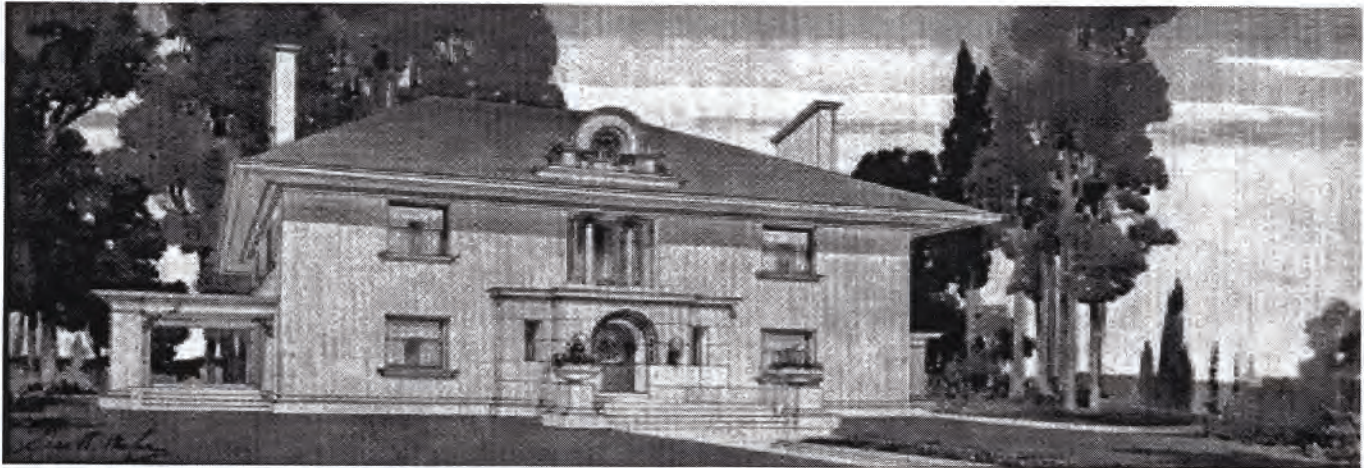


Velie House site in Kansas City, Missouri. The house was positioned where the church parking lot is at the rear of this photo. As shown by the house in the foreground, this neighborhood still has many original buildings. GWMQ.

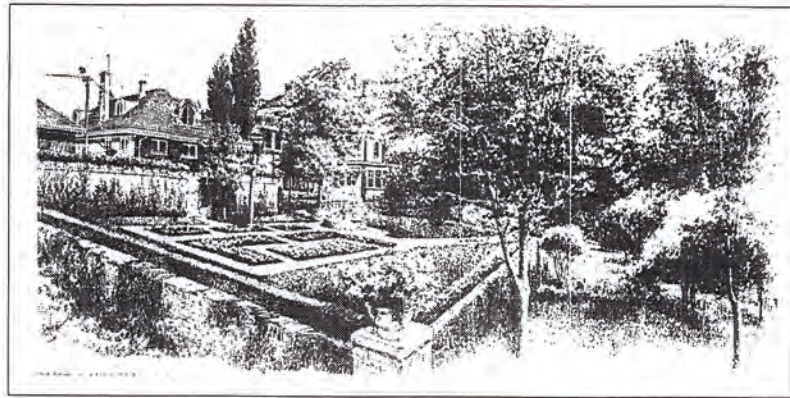
Finding Velie

On our recent trip into lower Middle West, we finally traced the origins of the Velie House in Kansas City, Missouri. Thanks to our original portfolio of Maher presentation drawings and house photos, we knew what the house would have looked like. Our spur to stopping in Kansas City was the Internet, that intriguing but not always reliable information source. Keying S.H. Velie, or maybe it was Velie and Kansas City, which was about all we had from a Maher presentation drawing, we found "Stephen Velie: A busy businessman," an article by Katie A. Thompson in the on-line The Field Reporter. (The other reference we had for the house was for E.H. Veile from a mistaken caption on finished house photos in the Inland Architect issue of January 1906.)

Velie turns out to be a grandson of the John Deere. He



Above, Maher's presentation drawing for the Velie House, possibly done by Lawrence Buck. Buck's signature is not visible, but the flowers in the trees at right look like his. Portfolio, GWMQ collection. Right, Velie House garden. Kansas City Star, May 17, 1914. Below, obituary photo. Kansas City Journal Post, November 16, 1933.



was the son of Deere's daughter Emma and her husband Stephen Velie, and was born in Princeton, Illinois, in 1862. His father became secretary and manger for Deere

Pneumonia Is Fatal



—Thompson Photo.
Stephen H. Velie, 72 years old, vice president of the John Deere Plow company and a nationally known sportsman, died Thursday at his home, 1228 Santa Fe road of pneumonia.

& Company in Moline, Illinois. The younger Velie went to the Michigan Military Academy and then Racine (Wisconsin) Business College, and in 1904, the year (based on Kansas City directories for 1904-05) his Maher house was built, was raised to secretary and manager of the John Deere Plow Company in Kansas City.

Led by Thompson's story, we headed for the Kansas City Public Library and its Special Collections Department

where we found all her sources and more. Velie's appearance was much commented on; historian Carrie Westlake Whitney wrote in 1908 that he was a "tall, well-proportioned and finely developed man." In 1912, the Kansas City Star reported Velie's interest in polo and the sport's ponies. "My business subjects me to a great nervous strain, therefore, I think I ought to be under a great physical tension in my play. The business and play should balance in this respect and that is why polo is an excellent exercise." Velie and his son Tom—Thomas, with Velie's wife Emma—were on the same team. The reporter added: "Mr. Velie and his son are also ambitious hunters, having hunted all kinds of big game found in the United States, Canada and Mexico." A softer report appeared in the Star for May 17, 1914; the subject was a new Velie garden much enjoyed by Emma. A drawing, above, showed the garden behind the house. The planting included Persian lilacs as a hedge, Dorothy Perkins roses, poppies, and bluebells, snapdragon, wild phlox and begonia transplanted from the Velie farm near Independence. "Mrs. Velie's visits to her garden are usually in the very early morning," the unidentified reporter wrote, "so the paths of broken

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The progressive movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was joined by a large number of American architects. Their achievement was native honesty not dominated by European styles. Complete design, from building to furniture, was the aim of some. An early focus will be the lives and work of Robert C. Spencer, Jr., Lawrence Buck, Percy Dwight Bentley and Robert Seyfarth. They're under-explored now. Each issue will have four to six pages on the work of Chicago architect George W. Maher (1864-1926) or his son Philip B. Maher (1894-1981). These pages will continue the Maher Quarterly started in 1991--back issues are available. We'll write, too, about architects associated with Frank Lloyd Wright and sometimes about Wright; William Bajari, who was Percy Bentley's first partner; and for counterpoint, those not known as progressive, H.H. Waterman and the Walcott brothers of Chicago.

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Hendrickson's Hut

Between 1950-85, Paul Hendrickson owned a restaurant in Michigan's Upper Peninsula called the Hut. During that time, he made the Hut into a landmark inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and modernist architecture, which will be in the next issue of *Prairie*.

For a preview, we're offering original copies in specially made envelopes of a brochure Hendrickson produced in 1975 to sell in the restaurant in Kearsarge. The brochure has color photographs, drawings, floor plans. The front and back covers are shown here.

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South Platte means "flat" River, from two sides of a Red Lion Road bridge near I-76 and Nebraska-Colorado border.



Deco-moderne-style Prairie movie theater in Ogallala, Nebraska.

